LCDR
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[redacted]

Below is a summary of interview of LCDR [redacted] USCG, conducted by the AIM informal board on August 24, 2006 concerning the diving incident which resulted in two deaths on August 17, 2006. AIM board members present at the interview were Captain [redacted], LCDR [redacted], and LCDR [redacted].

LCDR [redacted] reported aboard HEALY on 7 July 2006. He is currently assigned as the ship's [redacted]. He has [redacted] years of shipboard experience, and has served in the Coast Guard for over [redacted] years. This is his third EO job, following successful EO tours aboard SASSAFRAS and JARVIS. Ashore, he recently completed a tour with the United States Department of State, and as Executive Officer of NESU Charleston.

LCDR [redacted] stated that 17 August started out as a beautiful day. It was a sunny day, and was shaping up to be a nice day of ice liberty for the crew. After finishing some morning science work, the ship had stopped in the ice to allow the crew to relax and have some ice liberty.

After ensuring the engineering plant was properly configured for being hove to in the ice, LCDR [redacted] went down to the ice after liberty was granted, and noticed that BM2 DUQUE was in his dive gear near the bow, waiting for the ship's other two divers to arrive (LT HILL and ENS [redacted]). LCDR [redacted] stated that he talked and joked with BM2 DUQUE for a few moments, and kidded him about "waiting on women and jumping into ice water." BM2 DUQUE appeared in excellent spirits and eager for the dive.

As he walked around on the ice, LCDR [redacted] noticed that a Russian scientist was stripping down and preparing to jump in the arctic water. He watched the event, noted that he was roped off with line and had a proper tender for safety, and talked to a few members of the science party. He spent some time milling around talking to shipmates and then watched a pickup football game. At around 1700, or so, he headed aboard the ship for dinner, and to write an e-mail to his wife.

While composing the e-mail, he heard the pipe "HSC, your presence is requested on the ice." He noted that the pipe was not in an emergency format, e.g., "corpsman lay to the ice," so he didn't pay particular attention. A few seconds later a second pipe came, that stated "stretcher bearers lay to the ice." That is an emergency pipe, so LCDR [redacted] quickly grabbed his shoes and headed out for the brow.

On the ice, he saw a lot of people congregating near the dive area, and could see that some crewmembers were administering CPR to the divers. There was a huge sense of urgency, and some people were trying to figure out what to do. There was no response from the divers, so people started making preparations to get the divers aboard the ship. LCDR [redacted] helped lift BM2 DUQUE's stretcher up the brow. He was not strapped in right, but was in a safe position to get up the brow and transported to sickbay. There was some confusion about whether to take BM2 DUQUE to sickbay or to the flight

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deck, where the dive chamber is located. LCDR [redacted] took charge, and had BM2 DUQUE transported to sickbay. LCDR [redacted] did not see LT HILL taken up to sickbay, but she arrived there as well in the second stretcher. CPR was again started on both divers. The stretcher bearers were just out of TSTA, and looked to have things in control. He noticed the Russian scientist, [redacted], also doing CPR on one of the divers.

Soon the dive chamber was brought to sickbay. LCDR [redacted] realized that no one knew how to set it up, and he figured that he could. He opened the box and started taking inventory of parts. He grabbed other engineers to help him assemble it, and sent some others to get needed tools. He was somewhat surprised to see that the dive chamber was not a big stainless steel tube, but rather a flimsy orange blow up model. ENS [redacted] a ship's diver, showed up with directions and helped with the assembly. LCDR [redacted] thought that ENS [redacted] had chamber training and could help with the operation of it. LCDR [redacted] got the chamber assembled pretty quickly, tested it, and got it running. He had dive tanks for air, and also ran ship's service air to sickbay in case it was needed. He reported the chamber ready to dive.

Turning back to the divers, it didn't look good. LCDR [redacted] stated that XO and OPS were struggling to keep the flight surgeon on the phone due to some communications problems. Several times, LCDR [redacted] got paged to contact ECC. He knew from the ship's vibrations that they were placing the engines on line, and the ship was starting some pretty hard steaming. LCDR [redacted] then went to ECC to check on the engineering plant.

While in ECC, a pipe was made for all hands to muster on the flight deck. At a little after 2000, the CO informed the crew that two shipmates had died. The ship then slowed down.

In response to questions, LCDR [redacted] stated the following:

- LCDR [redacted] stated that he was not notified before hand of a dive. He did not tag out any equipment. He knew LT HILL wanted to dive. She had been talking about it frequently, but the ship hadn't gotten to it yet. Through these discussions he learned her main motivation was to train her personnel so she could have the dive locker squared away before she transferred.
- He was not surprised dive ops took place. But, he was not notified of it.
- If there was a dive checklist it never made it to engineering.
- LCDR [redacted] said that since slow shaft turns were needed to maintain position in the ice, he could not have secured the plant for dive ops using the typical CG divers down check lists he had seen in the past at numerous other units. Without shaft turns, it would have been unsafe, causing the ship to drift away from the ice.
- LCDR [redacted] said he had no need for divers to work on the ship.

- He secured sewage for ice liberty, and the forward sea chest and suction is always secured in the ice. So, the plant was not of any concern in regards to the safety of divers located well forward of the bow.
- He stated he has prior civilian diving experience.
- Divers in SASSAFRAS always had extensive tag out procedures for diving when the dived on the hull. This was simply a familiarization dive under ice, and was not the same thing. It was well forward of the ship and not on the hull. It was not a typical hull dive.
- LCDR [redacted] had one beer before dinner.
- LCDR [redacted] noted the following about the dive operation.
  - The divers had some problems with suits and equipment
  - LT Hill mentioned on previous occasions that the suits were old and she needed to change them out.
  - In CG Dive operations he had observed in the past there was usually a "Ready diver." There was not one here. But, he did note tending lines for each diver, which he felt were appropriate for this dive.
  - No diver down pipes were made.
  - He could not see a diver checksheet from his vantage point on the ice next to the dive side.
  - He had no doubt that LT Hill was completely in charge of the divers. He was not sure who was in charge of the surface tenders.
  - The sonar was operating.
  - No ORM or GAR was completed to his knowledge.
  - SASSAFRAS never dove with screws turning, or without tagging out equipment. But, that was for dives on the hull of the ship
- LT HILL was always safety conscious. "She was not one to take short cuts." He had observed her to be very business like at briefs and in email correspondence regarding crane operations.
- At one point he saw BOSN, XO and CO near the dive area. He does not recall seeing OPS near the dive side.
- LTJG [redacted] was in charge of the mishap response.
- Some fittings were missing on the hyperlite chamber
  - It needed a valve fittings and o-ring
  - It needed tools to fix the leak
- He did not see anything wrong or unsafe with the dive.
- He believes the divers did it right.
- LT HILL was taking the dive seriously. When LCDR [redacted] attempted to engage her in a conversation she stayed focused on getting the dive site ready.
- LCDR [redacted] stated the tanks were filled at a commercial facility. At least two months or more prior because the HEALY dive compressor was and still is OOC.
- LCDR [redacted] stated that moisture in tanks can deplete O2.
- LCDR [redacted] heard the depth gauges were maxed at 200ft.

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